

It's a punch!

It's not a perfin!

It's a *precancel*!

David W. Smith, Rochester, IN

In 1879 when postage due stamps first came out, larger post offices quickly realized the need to cancel the stamps in sheet form to save time. Several used devices such as pens, pencils, and crayons.

A few post offices used punches to cancel the stamps prior to use.

The best known is Baltimore, MD, with two heart-shaped punch holes in each stamp. Each punch was used in 1879 and 1880, being replaced in



1880 with a target cancel applied to the center of each block of four stamps. The Baltimore punch cancel is found on all denominations up to the 10¢.

Binghamton, NY, used a 5-point star. It is known only on the 3¢ 1879 postage due.

Westerly, RI, used two punches. The first produced a pattern of three joined circles with the center one larger. It has been seen on the 1¢ and 3¢ 1879 postage dues. The second produced a single circle 3.5mm in diameter. It is the only known punch on the 1884 postage due. It has been reported only on the 1¢ 1884 due.

A fourth unknown town used a punch that made two 4mm circles. It is on the 3¢ 1879 postage due. These are best collected on cover, but can be distinguished on the stamp. All are scarce.

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